PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11 TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN

For eight years I have struggled with a problem. No ordeal has been quite as difficult. I have worried about it - fretted about it - felt inadequate because other ministers are so clearly superior to me in this area. I refer to the composition of Sermon Titles. I have borrowed and stolen some: I have created a few of my own: I have used one word titles, catchy phrases, contemporary cliche's: when all else fails I have simply called the morning rendering a "Reflection". I am not sure but that my life would be totally happy if I did not have to make up sermon titles.

In a sense it's a terrible waste of time and energy. I am thoroughly convinced that the only people interested in sermon titles are ministers. In fact, I am always amused to read the religious page of the paper prior to Easter and Christmas and to conclude, what any thoughtful reader would conclude; namely, that the same thing is going to get said from hundreds of pulpits, but that an inordinate amount of time has been invested in creating the illusion that each one is going to be different.

And so, here comes my last Sunday in this pulpit - and three months ago a title popped into my head - and I have used it - a little irreveantly, to be sure - because if God ever gave me anything to say it is this: "Time flies When You're Having Fun".

Actually it really didn't just pop into my head. In fact I HAVE BEEN saying it regularly for some time in a situation that I find always very funny, although no one else around me does. The situation is this - three times a week I drive out to the YMCA for a men's physical fitness class over thelunch hour. Right in the middle of the program is an exercise I hate with a burning passion. We sit on the floor, fold our arms across our stomachs, and then hold our feet in the air for one minute. It feels like an hour. And without fail - after about 30 seconds have passed, I muster my strength and gasp "Time Sure Flies When You're Having Fun." And no one laughs except me.

Well - it does - and I have. Time - 8 years - has flown - because I

TIME FLIES being the minister of this church has not only been a privilege - it has been fun

~~have had fun~~ - and I can think of a lot less significant things to say on this occasion than that.

This, as you may now have guessed, will not be a farewell sermon. I began to preach that on June 9 and concluded it last Sunday. Besides, I am notoriously bad at saying good bye: my courage always vanishes and I would rather not do it at all. And beyond that, I'm not at all certain that it is appropriate. I do not intend to die - at least not yet: even though some of the kind words said about me ~~xhaxx~~ sound very much as if that, in fact, has happened. I was disconcerted to call at the hospital last week and to be asked ("Are You still around?") In any case, I do not regard what is happening here this morning as a farewell. I do not believe that relationships built on trust and love come to an end. I believe they go on and that they continue not only to influence us, but to have great meaning to us. I expect our paths will cross - many of us. At the very least in the context of a football and basketball rivaly between Purdue and a Big 10 School in Columbus. And so this is not a farewell - in fact it's not even much of a sermon. But for a few minutes allow me to reflect sermonically on the past, present and future.

The New Testament Lesson this morning was the opening of St. Paul's letter to the early Christian Church in Philippi. Paul wrote it from prison and what is unique about the letter particularly the section I read - is that it is very personal. In ~~fact~~ it Paul the theologian becomes Paul the pastor who misses his very good friends.

In the opening PAUL says three things that interested me. First, he thanks God for the memory of his friends at Philippi as partners in the Gospel. Second, he expresses his feelings about his friends in terms of ("the affection of Christ Jesus".) And third, Paul tells them that what he hopes for them - what he prays for - is that their ("love should abound with knowledge and discernment.")

LET ME USE THAT FORMAT ~~AS A FINAL SERMON~~ for my final remarks. I am thankful to God for you - and for your partnership with me in the Gospel. One of the real dangers of

the ministery as a profession is that the minister ~~is~~ may be so far out ahead of his people that they lose contact. I am convinced that that is one of the things that happened to the UPCUSA in the past decade. The Generals committed themselves to a battle and when they turned around the troops were far behind. I have not experienced that with you, and I am grateful to God for it.

Time after time this congregation has come through. When Big Brother/Big Sisters - was trying to get off the ground, the ~~bulk~~ bulk of the volunteers were from this church. When the Lafayette City Council was discussing a Housing Code, members of this congregation were in attendance. When money was needed to buy legal aid for a group of young men in trouble, this Church made the first contribution. When Project Commitment started, succeeded and then floundered, people from this church were involved in significant numbers. We have been in ministry together: we have been partners in the Gospel and I am grateful. Mention Secretaries (Evah Belle, Anne, Sandy ~~I can hardly wait to hear this~~)

I am grateful for the affection that characterizes the life of this congregation. You know, without affection, the life of a church is stale. In fact, it may be that affection is what gives life to a church. It certainly provides a certain freedom that makes being the minister very interesting. My memories are full of incidents that made us laugh together...

Of our organist looking for a kleenex in her purse during worship and pulling out a disposable diaper instead..

Of our Director of Music waltzing into my office one morning, slipping and falling down.

Of Jim Small prowling the Narthex while I'm preaching, looking for God only knows what..

Of my hymn book tied shut with a red ribbon on Christmas Sunday.

Of a birthday party comptete with flashing red lights in the street and a bull horn announcing - ("Come out with your hands up")

Of discreet wagers over the fortunes of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago Cubs

Of the unlikely duet of Don Wallick and Doyle Newton singing the Hallelujah Chorus at an Advent celebration.

Of the Bethany Bombers puffing their way thorugh two basketball seasons.

Of Thanksgiving Dinners and Christmas Candlelight serv ices: and communions and baptisms

You have been you, and you have allowed me to be me, and the affection of Christ Jesus has been lose among us.

Paul told the Philippians that he prayerd that their love might abound more and more. I pray that for you because I believe it's what really matters in a cnurch: the honest love of God that not many of us can verb alize very well - but which is expressed in worship that is both reverant and joyful: the love of the world which is expressed in ministry and mission: and love for each other in the church.

With all of that going for you, the future of this congregation is very, very bright. And be well assured that I will share that future with you, knowing that we are partners in the Gospel, grateful for youraffection and ~~xxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ praying that your love may abound.

In a little book about the ministry, James Dittes writes: "Significant events never happen with the clarity and dramatic preparation which they come to have in the writing of history and ~~xxxx~~ biography...Only in retrospect do events yield their pattern and significance."

I have found that to be true. I came here in 1966 not -knowing much about you, and you knowing even less about me. In my first sermon I quoted a Robert Frost poem that expressed what I fel t at the time and what I feel as I leave:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood.
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one travelor, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent ~~xx~~ in the undergroth:

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear:
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads divered in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

At the time, we fail to see the significance of what we are doing. Our choices seem to be made in a vacuum, a product of blind chance. And yet, in retrospect, I find even greater truth in the words of the Hymn:

> Praise Ye the Lord, who oer all things so wonderously reigneth,
> Shelters thee under his wings yea, so gently sustaineth!
> Hast thou not seen How thy desires have been
> Granted in what He ordaineth?

So I believe and confess that God has touched our life together with his grace and love. And I believe and confess that this church - that you and I - can continue to expect his presence: healing, loving, prodding, Judging - opening a door here - closing a door there: always quietly, always without the crystal clarity we want and desire. Because he is a God who came ~~xx~~ among us in that way - in a birth no one noticed. He is a God who

showed his love on a cross that few saw and fewer still understood. That God - our God - has promised to be with us.

For you - for the years together - and for the years ahead - I give thanks. AMEN

WHEN A MINISTER IS LEAVING OR RETIRING

You have bound us together in the church, great God, and built up the Spirit of love among us. Though we must go separate ways in working for your kingdom, help us to know that we are joined forever in your loving care. We thank you for years together, for mutural support and mutual forgiveness. Nev er let friendship fade, but keep us remembering one another, and grateful for the life we have shared in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

Johathan - May God bestore his richest blessings on you and your family. Only He knows how much you will be missed here. I know you will give Broad Street more than 100% as you have done here time and time again. I hope they are just as proud of you as we are and will love you and your family as much as we have. God knows you will be in our thoughts and prayers for ever. (Guess it is easier for me to say in writing than face to face. Would this be considered a cop-out) My Friend, I wouldn't have missed this opportunity for the world. You have been an absolute delight to work for.

Welcome all to worship
special welcome to guest:
sign card
stay for coffee
come again

Session - Tues - Aug 20

This is not an ordinary summer Sunday, and there is little sense pretending as if it is. I want to thank every one of you for coming this morning: Pauline & Chancel Choir for singing in the middle of their vacation. I have been always pleased with the caliber of music in this church. And one of the things I want to say in front of them - is that B.P.C. has the finest Director of Music, Organist & Choir in the community.

Presbyterian Law requires that I declare the pulpit of this church vacant after the service today. ~~That's a bit melodramatic, and so let it be understood that~~ Some of my friends have allowed as how the pulpit has been vacant for 8 years. In any case, please allow this statement - made before the service to fulfill the official requirement.

Last Sunday evening at a picnic - we were given a beautiful silver tray and chafing dish, and I want to thank every one who contributed to that gift. Both items will now lovingly placed permanently in our new home on the day we moved last week. And you should know that every day we marvel at your thinking gratefully, of the people who gave that gift. Thank others for gifts & kind words

Call attention to other announcements: Now let us worship

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8-11-74

Almighty God, our Father, in moments of integrity we acknowledge that you are the Lord of all men: that you love all men and judge all men with absolute justice. And so, our father, confident of your mercy and your love we hold up before you our concerns for our nation in this hour. Hear us as we pray:

Let us pray for our new President, Gerald Ford, and for his family: let us pray silently -

Let us pray for Richard Nixon - and his family - silently

Let us pray for our nation.

Father, give to your servant Gerald Ford, your gifts of wisdom, courage, sensitivity. Bless him in his lonely and important task; and grant him a sure sense of your providence and care. Renew within us, our father, a dedication to those good and noble principles of the past, and give us a good hope in the future: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Let us pray now for others: let us recall someone whose needs are real and immediate and pray for that person: let us pray silently -

let us pray for our loved ones and friends - silently

let us pray for someone who has offended us — or who we have offended — silently

Our father: hear our prayers for others: through J.C. our Lord. Amen

On this day let us pray for the church -

let us thank God for those who have gone before us - for those whose efforts and faith called this ~~church~~ congregation into being and strengthened it through the years. silently

let us pray for the leaders of the congregation - the Elders, Deacons, Teachers - all those who bear responsibility for the continuing ministry of the Church..

Father: we love your church: we are grateful for its ministry. Help us to see again that this congregation is no accident - no association of convenience - but an important outpost of your special people. Bless this congregation - through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Let us now give thanks to God -

let us offer our gratitude for all we have: for God's good gifts of food - shelter - for a world that sustains us - for people to love - let us pray silently

Our father, we give thanks - for all we have and more ... for the years we have been given: for the experiences we have shared: and for the sure sense of your love and your gracious presence: through J.C. our Lord. Amen

Almighty & eternal God - hear our prayers - hear the prayers that remain unspoken — for we offer them in the name of J.C. - who taught his disciples to pray saying — — Our F.